U.S. Coast Guard
Marine Safety Office Tampa

MSO Tampa Commercial Parasail Vessels
List of Lesson's Learned from Investigated Marine Casualties, MSO Tampa.

The following is a list of Lesson's Learned compiled from those Marine Casualties involving Commercial Parasail Vessels investigated by MSO Tampa. Commercial Parasail Operators are encouraged to read through these items, and utilized the lessons learned as guidance in their operations to promote safe operations.

Operations:

- Maintain (on board the vessel) all appropriate manufacturer instructions and manuals as to the maintenance, care, inspection, servicing, capacities and capabilities of all parasail equipment used on board the vessel.

- Evidence that the Parasail Equipment has been properly annually inspected and serviced by a certified manufacturers representative or facility. (Servicing receipt, log book, etc.)

- Maintain a parasail daily logbook that captures all required maintenance and inspection checks on all parasailing equipment. All required maintenance to parasail equipment shall be in accordance to the manufacturer guidelines.

- Maintain a daily weather logbook that documents the forecasted weather for the operational area prior to departure with passengers. All forecasted weather should be analyzed for the determination of safe parasail operations in accordance to the vessel and parasail equipment capabilities.

- Provide evidence, such as a logbook of crew training and the companies training policies and procedures.

- Each parasail company shall establish operating parameters and policy of their parasail operations. This should include, among other things, Operational distances off shore to allow room to retrieve parasail rides down wind without loosing sea room.

- Each parasail company shall establish emergency procedures as to adequately address any parasailing emergency that may occur. Such emergencies shall include the retrieval of the aloft parasailers and a means to obtain assistance.

Equipment:

- Each parasail vessel shall be equipped with a VHF radio capable to send and receive radio traffic on channel 16 and to receive weather reports from the National Weather Service.
- A means to determine the true weight of parasail riders shall be maintained onboard the vessel. All parasail equipment is to be confirmed as appropriate for the associated weight of the parasail passengers. The equipment manufactures guidance shall be readily available for reference.

- Require that all parasail towlines be fitted with chaffing devises such as metal hardware (D-rings) or a thimble in the formed eye of the rope, either attached by a splice or through the use of a knot. Appropriate knots, such as a double figure eight knot or splices are to be used rather than a bowline to provide greater reliability and strength.

- Adequate stowage shall be provided for all parasail equipment while not in use. Placement of the equipment in the bilge compartment of the engine should be prohibited.

- Insure positive control of the winch operation to control the line payout/ retrieval.

- "Override controls" should be considered to prevent the knot tying the parasail line to the parasail yoke, from being jammed against the deck block thereby reducing/ eliminating premature stress failure.

- The parasail line should always be properly secured to the winch spool. To be properly secured to the spool, the line can either pass through a fitted D-ring on the spool and tied to itself after a number of turns, or, the line is looped around the spool and secured via a knot, such as a bowline.

- The last remaining 100' of towline, closest to the winch spool, shall be fitted with indicators to warn the operator that he is coming close to the end of the line. Such indicators can include, numerous colored rags tied to the line, or the line should be dyed a bright color (as long as any dye does not endanger the lines strength).

- For instance, the vessels should have an auxiliary means of power for emergency operations when the vessels main engine loses power. This will prevent parasailers from being stranded aloft.

- Inspection requirements should be implemented to prevent failure of operational equipment that is used to hoist passengers. This would promote the safety of passengers on this type of vessel. Inspection of the towing winch, emergency retrieval capabilities, lines, riggings, harness, parachute and hardware used to hoist passengers should all be part of the vessels inspection.

- Other regulatory changes would include endorsements on the license specific to parasail operators. Operational areas with height restrictions and distance from shore requirements.